

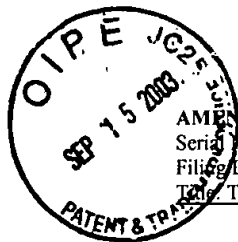
IN THE CLAIMS

Please amend the claims as follows:

Claims 1-14 (Canceled)

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15. (Currently Amended) A method of immobilizing an instrument, including:
providing a relaxable material having a first passage;
introducing the instrument into the first passage; and
reducing an effective area of the material around the instrument by self-relaxing the material to immobilize the instrument with respect to the material.
16. (Original) The method of claim 15, including providing a base and a movable member coupled to the base yet capable of rotating with respect to the base, the movable member including a second passage aligned with the first passage.
17. (Original) The method of claim 16, including, aiming a trajectory formed by the commonly-aligned first passage and the second passage of the movable member using at least one imagable locator along the trajectory.
18. (Original) The method of claim 16, in which the base includes a groove, and further including laterally bending the instrument into the groove.
19. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 16, ~~in which the providing the material includes providing a relaxable material, and~~ further including providing a stem spreading the relaxable material around the first passage, and in which the reducing the effective area includes relaxing self-relaxing the relaxable material ~~includes~~ by removing the stem over the introduced instrument.



AMENDMENT AND RESPONSE UNDER 37 CFR § 1.111
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20. (Original) The method of claim 19, further including providing a locking member, and engaging the locking member to the base to fix the movable member in place before removing the stem.

91 21. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 20, in which providing the base includes providing a mounting seat receiving the movable member and a detachable collar receiving the locking member, and further including, after removing the stem:

removing the locking member; and

removing the collar.

22. (Canceled) The method of claim 15, in which the providing the material includes providing a relaxable material, and in which the reducing the effective area of the material around the instrument includes relaxing the relaxable material around the instrument.

92 23. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 15, further including providing a slidable component having a second passage substantially aligned with the first passage, introducing the instrument into the substantially aligned first and second passages, and in which the reducing the effective area of the material around the instrument includes at least partially offsetting the second passage from the first passage to immobilize the instrument.

24. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 23, in which the at least partially offsetting the second passage from the first passage includes sliding the second passage with respect to the first passage.

93 25. (New) The method of claim 15, in which the providing the relaxable material having the first passage comprises providing a ball that includes the relaxable material.

26. (New) The method of claim 25, in which the providing the ball includes providing a relaxable cylindrical sleeve disposed within the ball.

27. (New) The method of claim 15, in which the providing the relaxable material having a first passage includes providing the relaxable material having at least a portion spread about the first passage, and in which the reducing the effective area of the material around the instrument includes releasing the portion spread about the first passage to permit self-relaxation.

28. (New) A method comprising:
aiming a first passage to align its axial trajectory with a target;
locking the first passage in an aligned position;
introducing an instrument into the first passage; and
releasing a spread-apart material about the first passage to reduce an effective area of the material around the instrument by self-relaxing the material to immobilize the instrument with respect to the material.

29. (New) The method of claim 28, in which the aiming includes locating at least one locator along the trajectory.

30. (New) The method of claim 28, further including laterally bending the immobilized instrument.

31. (New) The method of claim 28, in which the releasing the spread-apart material comprises removing a stem.

32. (New) A method comprising:
aiming a first passage to align its axial trajectory with a target;
locking the first passage in an aligned position;
introducing an instrument into the first passage; and
expanding a material about the first passage to reduce an effective area of the material around the instrument to immobilize the instrument with respect to the material.

new
matter

33. (New) The method of claim 32, in which the aiming includes locating at least one locator along the trajectory.

34. (New) The method of claim 32, further including laterally bending the immobilized instrument.

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35. (New) The method of claim 32, in which the releasing the spread-apart material comprises removing a stem.

